



Dear Andover Norton Customer,

Another busy month and still running out of parts. But then our suppliers foundries, machine shops and even the chromium platers now resume their services and gradually supplies are coming back in.

After the last disastrous delivery from our camshaft supplier of many years we had no choice but to find a new one. Predictably this new, top quality supplier is dearer than the previous source but deservedly so. We just had the first new camshafts in and hope to have the full range available shortly.

Other parts that came in strengthen our Featherbed/Dommi portfolio. You find all our newly introduced parts on our "News" page.

Triumph parts move in increasing quantities but some of the suppliers are still in lockdown so some items are missing despite our timely placing of orders for them.

Yet another Comment to the Norton/Garner Era

Bob Rowley, Norton Road Tester and later "Chief of Production" in the Rotary Era, comments on the practices in Garner's "Factory" compared to Norton Motors Ltd's in 1990, also a bankruptcy/liquidation period:

"We do not seem to have a free motorcycle press. Motorcycle News are the worst offenders.

Certainly they did not help us at Norton in 1990 always listening to David MacDonald, the bank-installed CEO. I recall Richard Negus doing a decent job on the F1 engine unit re-engineered Police bike, but MacDonald took it off Richard and had Barry Symonds build Mac's version. I did not blame Barry as he was working to his contract.

Anyway the high speed handling was terrible. A self start weave that self excited (and the Rider!). It settled down at around 110 MPH but felt very unstable. My father passed away and MacDonald arranged for Motorcycle News to ride the bike. They said how fabulous it was! Under his authority MacDonald released it to West Midlands police for test and evaluation He did all this whilst I was on Bereavement Leave, I could not fight it anymore.

A week later we were asked to go to a review meeting. To my embarrassment they challenged me asking how on earth had I allowed such a bad handling bike to be issued to them. I would normally sort of start getting a red neck and a bit agitated but with me still upset over my Dad I just took it on the chin. I never got an apology from MacDonald. Why am I mentioning this after all these

years? I am proud to say us, the Norton Motors Ltd Directors, challenged our Midland Bank imposed chairman whenever he tried to do something that we thought was against the law. Richard might recall that we had no chance of making the F2, so we had a board meeting and we all agreed to pay the two deposits we had been given back. MacDonald was traveling down from Carlisle, his home.



The Norton F2 Styling Prototype, the brainchild of MacDonald, done by "Styling International" A uninspired design reminding of kitchen appliances (mixers and vacuum cleaners) or East-German motorcycles. It deservedly got lukewarm reviews and very little interest from the buying public.

So we never consulted him. From the Boardroom we spoke collectively to the Midland Bank manager and instructed him to pay the deposits back. You see whenever we sold an asset the bank would release a small amount of money to keep us ticking over. Within 15 minutes of instructing the bank to pay back, MacDonald rang us. We were still in the meeting and no-one had left the room. We overruled him and insisted we pay back.

Around an hour later our Bank Manager rang back, and I said on the speaker conferences call, how did MacDonald find out? That's when I realised that the Bank was just asset stripping. As for the latest episode in Norton, it makes our problems that we had then insignificant. How did Inspection AND Road Test allow parts to be slaved off other bikes? I just can't get my head around that."

Customers

We often get nice mails from customers who have finished a project like this one:

"Hi guys, just to say a big thanks to the team at Andover Norton for all the help and advice in getting my Norton back to life. The bike was manufactured in 1975 for the UK market and was despatched to Elite Motors of Tooting soon after.

I purchased the bike in 2007 and it remained in bits amongst various boxes scattered around the house and garage until January 2020 when lockdown inspired me to bring it back to life and I think it's turned out rather splendid! Only 5,000 miles from new with the paint on the tank and side panels still looking mint. The bike is all original apart from the rubber that had perished over its 45 year life span. Good for another 50 years now.



Incidentally, my first Commando was an Interstate Mk2A purchased in 1973 brand new from a Norton Villiers employee in Wolverhampton, where I lived as a young man. He had the bike as a retirement gift from the factory in Marston Road under the auspices of Mr. Dennis Poore. I think I paid around £700 back then. Never forgot that bike! Thanks once again for all your help. Keep up the good work."

Best wishes Ron Daker.

A typical case in the current lock-down period. I have seen customers return to the fold in my German shop I hadn't heard from for years, and in one case I even had to go back to our hand-written index cards we used pre-1989 in my previous companies Rockerbox and Stuedemann to find the name again!

Book Reviews

About a decade ago we bought J.R.Publications and thus added all original Triumph Parts Lists, Handbooks and Workshop Manuals to Andover Norton's already existing portfolio of Norton literature.

The books have since been Phil Albutt's responsibility. With my background of four decades in Norton and Triumph parts Phil occasionally asks me to review sample books we may be interested to offer alongside our other books.

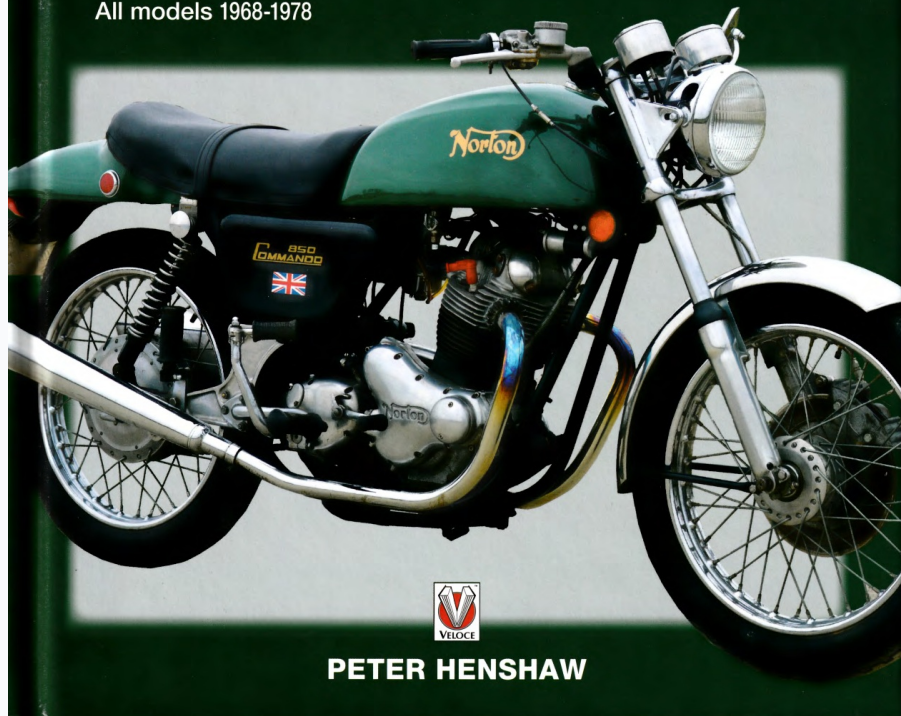
I recently read two books for him, one on the Triumph and one on the Norton side, and thought I should give you my personal opinions on both.

1. Not the "Commando Bible"

Written by Peter Henshaw, who currently seems to write books about all British motorcycles, this book is the answer to no question.

THE
NORTON
COMMANDO **BIBLE**

All models 1968-1978



Given the excellent book “Norton Commando” by Mick Duckworth, an author I have always known and respected for his intimate knowledge of the British motorcycle industry and its products, it is debatable if yet another book on the same subject was necessary. Especially if, as in this one, no new facts come to light.

The scant background on historical and technical matters becomes blatantly obvious on many pages. My examples are far from complete. The first time the lack of the author’s background becomes clear is the picture on Page 8 of the Commando Development Team. Bernard Hooper is not fifth from left, that is Tony Denniss, Hooper is sixth from left.

His mistakes continue with (P16) the mention of an Atlas pressed steel primary cover “with multiple fixing screws”. Obviously the author has no clue how the Atlas primary chaincase is held together and/or mistook a P11 for an Atlas. On Page 31 the “S” has a high-level mudguard on prototypes that “doesn’t seem to have lasted long”. I suspect the author didn’t spot the difference between the “S” and the “SS” that indeed didn’t last long but actually had that high front mudguard. On Page 35 all Norvil Proddy Racers had AMAL GP carbs. Wrong, most, if not all, were supplied with Mk1 Concentrics; On Page 36 Henshaw suggests Norton was runner-up to Honda in numbers of “Superbikes” produced and sold, blissfully forgetting insignificant other manufacturers like the other three Japanese manufacturers, not to mention BMW and Triumph/BSA.

On Page 42 it is suggested the “R”-Type came with the Fastback tail unit whilst only its successor, the “Roadster”, had the normal mudguard/tail light arrangement. On Page 53 the stillborn prototype electric starter was in “the same position of the old magneto, as on the Mk3”. Oh really? The whole “Combat” chapter is

the usual mixture of myths and hearsay, and the bike “badged as an 850” on P54 actually IS an 850. Page 58 claims the 850s had “more robust locking rings” for the exhaust pipes. In fact they were the same thread as the previous, only shorter due to the necessity of spherical seats and collets behind them and thus even more prone to stripped exhaust threads and to coming loose. In no way were they “more robust”. On Pages 64/65 the old “iffy Italian frames” saga is repeated. How long do you think an Italian supplier was likely to last if every single frame supplied then had to go to Reynolds to be “rectified”? An old myth fuelled by or invented in the rose-tinted memoirs of Ken Sprayson. No factory would and could put up with a constantly problematical core component in production. Add to it Verlicchi are still making frames for the big European manufacturers.

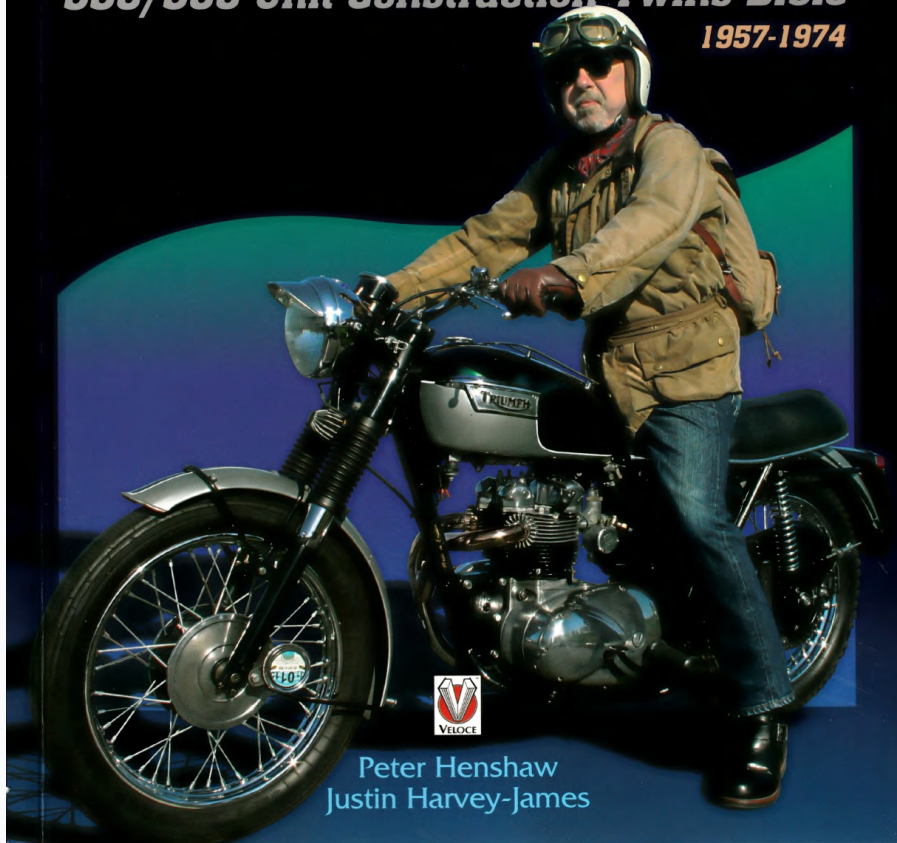
Page 72 claims 120 JPN replicas had a short-stroke engine. Where are they all? The only short-stroke engines ever fitted to “production” bikes were the ten or less fitted to the TX750 “Thruyton Club Racers”. On Page 81 all who have ever worked on an 850Mk3 now at long last hear the truth: the primary chain tensioner is pressure-fed by the oil pump. One lives and learns. P120 doesn’t tell the story of the “Thruyton Club” Racer. Only the sales brochure is shown with a bike pictured that was never built and sold (wrong fairing and petrol tank). It also tells us “the short-stroke engine had a one-piece crankshaft”- oh no, it didn’t- and “an outrigger bearing” for the gearbox mainshaft- neither. It also claims the short-stroke engine was used by Peter Williams in the 1974 TT which, according to Williams and White, is not correct. The TX also did not have “special frame rails” to make it lower, all it has is a special headsteady and higher front isolastic mounting brackets welded to a standard Commando frame to get the engine higher up, with the rear frame loop cut off half-way and re-welded on at 90° to support the seat, and 18” wheels front and rear. If you want to see a real Thruyton Club Racer look into Mick Duckworth’s book “Norton Commando”. Or look at mine.

I told Phil to forget about adding the book to our Portfolio.

TRIUMPH

350/500 Unit Construction Twins Bible

1957-1974



2. Triumph 500s

Partly from the same author as the "Commando Bible" this is most probably the most boring book about Triumph motorcycles I have ever read, and I am a Triumph parts man, thus actually interested in the subject matter!

The first chapter seems systematic in principle, going through features and modifications year by year. It was quite obviously compiled by the second author, supposedly a Triumph specialist. After a few model years I got bored to death by the vague details and by the advice in virtually every model year. "Colours were so-and-so but may have been different for various markets in that year", "the specification was so-and-so, but may have differed on your bike, check with the TOMCC or the VMMC", and "various importers did various things to the bikes so your particular bike may have had a different spec when new".

The second chapter "What might have been" shows the worst BSA Fury picture I have ever seen and very little more. The third chapter "Living with a 350/500 Triumph" gives very general advice on what to watch when buying a secondhand motorcycle and an overview (yet again) of what choices one has in the field. The fourth chapter "Modifications and improvements" is pretty general and could be cut and pasted into virtually any advice on British bikes.

The fifth chapter "How Meriden worked" is basically the protocol of a John Nelson interview which poses the question "Why not read John Nelson's book instead?" The "Specifications" (Appendix 1) are also in Roy Bacon's book "Triumph Twins and Triples" as well as in the John Nelson book (see below).

If you are interested in learning more about your particular Triumph 500 about two pages of the book are relevant for you. If you contemplate buying one the chapters after the year-by-year descriptions are only marginally helpful. Add to it some really bad pictures, if you intend to show a detail you don't put the bike in the driveway of an industrial unit cluttered with various distractions in the background and take a bad photograph to boot. Also, given the author had the benefit of talking to the late John Nelson I find it amazing that the company John founded to provide original Triumph literature isn't mentioned in the "potential sources" for it whilst all possible pirates under the sun are.

Talking of John Nelson the definite book on 500 Triumphs already exists. It was written thirty years ago by him (John Nelson "Tiger 100 and Daytona, Haynes) and is still available secondhand if you really want it. The very concise companion to it, the Pre-Unit 1939-74 Tiger 100/Daytona Year by Year Parts List, is still available from us as [JRP026](#).

Given John was Service Manager for Triumph for most of his life, also given John was a personal fan of the 500s, once telling me proudly he still had one of the very last disc-brake models, I tend to think this book is as uncalled-for as the previous one. Again I told Phil this is not a book we want to carry.

Bikes

Café Racers

Talking of 500 Triumphs I recently had a customer on the phone who intended to buy a "café racer" for his girlfriend as her first bike. I told him I thought this was probably the worst possible choice. Café racers or "coffee roasters", as we call them after my friend Guenter's wife was misunderstood by a bank clerk when she told him what the money she tried to transfer was for are visual replicas of 1960s and 1970s racers. The odd seating position stems from the desire to get the greatest possible top speed through the smallest possible frontal area out of basically underpowered motorcycles.

Ask Peter Williams about the pains he took in the wind tunnel to make his John Player racers competitive against the more powerful opposition! This dictated a seating position with the rider's backside on top of the rear wheel and his nose on the top fork yoke. Very uncomfortable and far from ideal as far as C of G and maneuverability goes. Look at current GP race bikes where the riders sit far further forward and relatively upright. Any production motorcycle with normal, wider handlebars further up is by far the better choice on public roads. Note this view comes from me, owner of several 1960s/70s race bikes and with a quarter of a century on race tracks under my belt and, yes, after three days in the Alps on an "Old Boys Tour" on my genuine Norvil Proddy racer. One of the worst ideas in my life.



Very nice caricature of the idiotic rider position on a typical 1960s/1970s race bike, taken from a French motorcycle mag of the period!

I hence advised the man to please buy a bike with an upright riding position for the lady, where she feels on top of things and has easy control of the motorcycle. Given the 500 Triumphs are nice compact motorcycles I suggested he should buy her one. Amazingly (for me) he took my advice onboard.

Motorcycle Electrics

We get many calls about electrics, usually about the modern rectifiers and the Lucas stator. The majority of these calls are from new owners or those that are trying to repair or fault find for the first time, so to some this maybe common sense, and some have learnt the hard way.

The first thing you need is a wiring diagram or schematic. This will give you a rationalised view of how the electrical items are connected as it will show the colour of cables and where they run from and where they run to. However it will not tell you how many cables run to a position, the reason being is that your wiring loom would be very heavy and thick if every live feed needed for various electrical items was taken from the ignition switch. You may find two cables of the same colour coming from a double spade terminal.

The next item you need is a suitable multimeter. Some of these are now so small they can fit in touring luggage, some if they have a moving coil meter are on the larger side. Please read the instructions for it, some are well protected, some are not and will not take kindly to having a lot of current passed through the meter if it is on the wrong setting or the leads are not in the correct holes. With a multimeter, this allows you to check along circuits for any open circuits or short circuits. It is safer way than just keeping on replacing fuses. A fuse blows for a reason. Depending on where you have worked with electric in the past it will either be to protect the circuit or from my world, to protect the source. Can you imagine if the fuse in your kettle blows and the substation tripped out - the whole neighbourhood would be well upset.

Some common problems I have seen on Nortons are mainly due to the age of the loom. The insulation gets hard on the cable carrying the higher current, it can also shrink back from the terminal. I always recommend that if you disconnect and no longer use a Red earth wire, ensure it is insulated so that it doesn't float around and touches anything it shouldn't. It will also avoid noise due to the vibrations. Another common area is the MK3 headlamp shell. There is lot in there and one problem I had was a glowing warning light so I removed the headlamp and it went away, nothing could be seen at first, replaced it an back it came. I finally sussed it out to be the wires on the bulb retainer pushing into a multi connector down the side of the cables where they enter the connector.

With a MK3 Commando, the most important wire, even over and above the live cable from the battery itself, is the thick Red engine start earth cable that runs from the rear crankcase stud aft of the barrel to the battery. Always ensure that this is connected, if you still have the red earth cable from the loom to the head, it will return the current to the battery. If you inadvertently touch the start button, it will melt.

If you are not happy or not confident working on a live system remove the fuse, it is good practice to remove the fuse until you

have found the earth. Those more confident will fault find with the fuse in place to follow the voltage, this method is good for finding broken cable or terminal.

Electrics can be quite scary, in my past life some of the mechanics in the department hated electrics, but they soon changed when they learnt more about it. I used to start with electric comes in two types, flat electric ie DC, and wiggly electric ie AC. From this we then moved onto the amount of wires in each type, then some wiggly electric wiggles more than other other wiggly electric. Then we moved onto scary high voltage electric, why they installed this on a warship god only knows.

Ashley Cutler

Our Bikes

Joe:

Not much from me. My customers have taken the lockdown period to drag their moss-gathering projects from the dark corners of their garages and started on them in earnest, needing lots of parts. That put paid to my plans to get some bikes finished and tested where only small adjustments were needed, and my next big project came to a quiet stop, the rebuild of our 1998 press bike I destroyed (restructured?) in Scotland in 2010.

I had a new frame welded up and started all hopeful on a Sunday, getting the engine with subframe back together with the main frame, and then planned to fit forks, swinging arm and airbox.



Then something happened everybody who ever tried to re-assemble a bike after a long period of it being in bits will know. Bits disappear unexplainably. In my case it was the spacer between the steering head bearings- same as on a Commando, but shorter- and the bottom half of the airbox. Now the spacer I could understand, it is small enough to roll under a shelf or to get thrown into the scrapbin by someone unaware what it is. The bottom half of the airbox, however, is too big to disappear. About the size of the bottom half of a Roadster petrol tank, and nobody has thrown it away. I am sure by the time I have got a secondhand one (we used the BMW F650 airbox at the time) I will find the bloody bottom half the next day.

Reminds me of the JPN Replica I rode as a student in Southampton and later in Hamburg, took it apart to restore it, and three moves later I missed the complete primary chaincase, both halves! Everything else was there.....

I think this project, planned as an easy exercise similar to a meccano kit, will take far longer than I thought.....

Simon: An Emergency Repair



13.1749 Drain plug tool, £4.95 + carr./VAT

[Shop](#)



13.1753 Drain plug set with tool, £11.46+ carr./VAT

[Shop](#)

I was riding home from work one afternoon in May when my 1970 Commando 750 started to slow down and run on one cylinder. I was on a quiet road but it was a hot day so I continued for another ½ mile until I could stop under the shade of trees in the sleepy village of Urchfont. After putting the bike on its centre stand I was dismayed to see petrol pouring from the carburettor area and quickly turned off the petrol tap. Closer inspection revealed that the left side float bowl drain plug had unthreaded and fallen out. I was 15 miles from home. I have breakdown insurance cover but knew at least a 2 hour wait was probable. There was no public transport available in this rural area. A few cars and walkers passed me but (unusually) no one stopped to offer help. Covid-19 caution was understandably evident. There was little point in trying to find the missing plug which could have been lying up to a mile away.

I needed an emergency fix and started to think what could be used to plug the bottom of the float bowl. I searched in my backpack but nothing was suitable. Perhaps I could make something to keep the fuel from escaping? I carry a pocket knife and wood was available from the trees. I rather self-consciously broke off a sycamore branch of about the right diameter that overhung the road. Cutting and shaping it was quite easy. My first attempt was fitted in place but leaked slightly. After more work with my knife it seemed leak proof - I could not risk a fire. Something was needed to stop it falling out. I cut a groove in the bottom of the plug and tied some flex from my tool kit around the carb bowl. I was ready to get on my way again.

The fix worked well. Keeping to low RPM and reaching down to check the plug every so often, the remainder of my ride home was at a leisurely pace.

I have added a drain plug and washer to my tool kit. (Parts [99.1153](#) & [AMAL622/155](#)). Checking the tightness of the plugs will now be a part of my servicing schedule. Our tool part 13.1749 is useful for this purpose.





Collections and Trade Counter

As we have been moved to 'Defcon 3' by Boris, we are going to open the trade counter for 'Contactless timed Collections'.

We have assessed the Risks and will ask the customers to follow this procedure :

- Pre-order 24 hours before Collection.
- Payments taken by Telephone at time of order.
- We will agree a 30 min collection time window to manage how many customers can be on-site.
- Adhere to our 2 metre Social Distancing Rules.

As we have several members of staff who are categorised by the NHS as "Vulnerable" we are not accepting any unplanned Trade Counter Customers at this time for safety reasons.

Webshop Updates

Further updates to our Webshop and despatching systems now means that you will no longer receive an email to mark your web order as despatched. Our new shipping methods now mean that you will be contacted directly by the courier of your parcel (Royal Mail, DPD or DHL) by either Text Message or Email with the tracking information for your parcel.

Please contact us if you have any changes to your personal information, so that we may keep your record up to date.

Calendar Competition

There is still time to get your entries in for our next Calendar! So please send your high quality images to newsletter@andover-norton.co.uk along with your name, where you are in the world and some history of your time with your bike.

The Team at Andover Norton



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